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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: PRESIDENT CHEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF
CESSATION OF THE NATIONAL UNIFICATION COUNCIL AND GUIDELINES

11. Summary: On the February 28 Incident Memorial Day, Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies gave prominent reporting and editorial coverage to President Chen's announcement Monday that the National Unification Council (NUC) will "cease to function" and the National Unification Guidelines (NUG) will "cease to apply." Almost all papers, with the exception of the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, reported Chen's announcement on their front pages. These newspapers also devoted their first few pages to various news stories about the reactions of Washington, Beijing and the pan-Blue camp to Chen's decision. The pro-status quo "China Times" ran a current opinion survey on its page four which reported that 51 percent of the people polled said they do not support Chen's decision to cease the functioning of the NUC while 20 percent said they supported such a move. Also, 47 percent of the respondents said they are worried about the deterioration of cross-Straits relations, and 46 percent said they are concerned about the damage done to Taiwan's relations with the United States. The same poll result also indicated that President Chen's approval rating has dropped to a new low of 24 percent. A poll on the front page of mass-circulation "Apple Daily" also showed that 56 percent of the people polled said they don't think Chen's decision will reduce tensions between Washington, Beijing, and Taipei. The newspaper also ran a news story on its page two with the headline: "The Presidential Office's Interpretation Is That the United States Does Not Strongly Oppose [Chen's Plan to] Scrap the NUC and NUG."

12. The Chinese-language dailies editorialized either on Chen's announcement or the February 28 Incident. The "Free Talk" column in the "Liberty Times" and an editorial in the pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" both hailed Chen's decision, calling it a move that highlights Taiwan's sovereignty. An "Apple Daily" editorial noted that Washington said it understood Chen's move because it realized that the KMT and Ma Ying-jeou's pro-unification stance could present real lurking dangers for the United States. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, called Chen's move an insult to himself and to Taiwan, as Chen has "publicly put on the Incantation Hoop [meaning that he is being restricted] offered to him by the United States." Journalist Lin Shu-ling said in a news analysis in the "China Times" that Chen succeeded in going ahead with his plan to scrap the NUC and NUG because he has seen through Washington's pattern in handling the cross-Straits issues. An editorial in the limited-circulated, conservative, pro-unification English-language "China Post" directly pointed

out that given Chen's announcement, the credibility of the United States' is now at stake and its one-China policy is undermined. End summary.

A) "Making An Incantation [to Block out the Ghost of Unification]"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] said (2/28):

"A-bian used the word `cease' [zhong-zhi] to replace `abolish' [fei-chu] and marked an ending for the big show of scrapping the NUC and NUG, which started playing during the Lunar New Year holidays. This ending may not please all the local supporters of Taiwan's nativism, but they can at least accept it. . There is still a long way to go for Taiwan to become a normal nation even though it has crossed the threshold of scrapping the NUC and NUG. Besides, every hurdle starting from the [holding of the] defensive referendum [in 2004] to scrapping [fei] the NUC and NUG has been very difficult. [Taiwan] is facing more and more tests and obstacles, and it will be easily torn apart by China if Taiwan people fail to unite together."

B) "President A-bian's Announcement of the Cessation of the NUC Has Secured the Principle of `People Possessing the Right to Their Country's Sovereignty' and Raising Taiwan People's Voices"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 100,000] editorialized (2/28):

". President Chen's announcement [of the cessation of the NUC and NUG] was mainly based on the democratic principle that people have the right to the sovereignty of their country; it was also a move made [to protest] China's non-peaceful attempt to alter the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, as evidenced by its continuous military threats

[against the island] and the `Anti-Secession Law.' Chen's announcement is thus not a move for Taiwan to provoke China but a [show of] respect for Taiwan's public views. Nor is it an attempt to alter the cross-Strait status quo but a necessary announcement to remind the international community that China is the one that is really attempting to change the status quo. We thus gave high marks to Chen's decision at this historical moment, which showed that he, despite China's threats, insists on maintaining Taiwan's status quo of freedom, democracy and human rights and safeguarding the 23 million Taiwan people's freedom of choice. Taiwan's history will remember this day and this page, the moment in which Taiwan people's sovereignty is genuinely highlighted. ."

C) "A-Bian Wins His Victory in Grave Dangers"

The mass-circulated "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (2/28):

". Chen announced [Monday] that to safeguard Taiwan's democracy and maintain the [cross-Strait] status quo, the NUC will cease to function. ... This statement showed that the United States has understood Taiwan's decision to cease the functioning of the NUC, and it is also a belated strike against China's [enactment of] the `Anti-Secession Law'. .

". In reality, the worst consequence [during the process of Chen's move to scrap the NUC and NUG] was Washington's harsh reaction; Washington has used various means to show Taiwan that [Chen's move] would severely jeopardize Taiwan's interests and put the island in an unfavorable position. But perhaps [during this process,] the United States gradually became aware that showing appropriate support for the DPP may be a way to stabilize Taiwan's pro-U.S. attitude, and that the KMT and Ma Ying-jeou's pro-unification stance could pose real lurking dangers for the United States. Perhaps it was based on such an insight that the United States said it understood [Taiwan's reasons for]

the move. ."

D) "Humiliation for Chen and for Taiwan: Chen Shui-bian Publicly Puts on the Incantation Hoop Offered to Him by the United States"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] commented in an editorial (2/28):

"Chen Shui-bian's movement to push for `[Taiwan's] new constitution and to scrap the NUC and NUG' suffered a severe defeat; He publicly put on the 'incantation hoop' handed to him by the United States yesterday and in the meantime gave up Taiwan's national dignity. .

"Chen's move to `scrap the NUC and NUG' [fei tong] this time was aimed at demonstrating his ability to `change the status quo.' But judged by the Presidential Office's statements yesterday, Chen is evidently tightly controlled by the Incantation Hoop that `will not allow him to change the status quo.' Chen repeatedly emphasized [Monday] that Taiwan has no intention to alter the status quo. Strictly speaking, even though Chen did not reiterate the `Five No's' pledge, his declaration that `Taiwan will amend its constitution by adhering to [the constitutional] procedures' was akin to keeping his `Four No's' pledge. Chen did not necessarily have the upper hand with regard to his `last No' [in the `Five No's' pledge] by announcing the cessation of the NUC and NUG. [We] can say that the `Five No's' pledge is in substance `the status quo that cannot be altered.' . What is really bizarre is that even though Chen's announcement [Monday] indicated another severe defeat for him, he may be the only one who benefits from such a development. . Chen may have won a victory by successfully snatching back his position as the flagman of the Taiwan independence, but he has also made his country and society pay a severe price!"

E) "Maneuvering Through Another Door, Bian Has `the Next Step' [in Mind]"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling said in a news analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (2/28):

". Bian has been in power for over five years and has had a huge national security team. His decision not to care about [the attitudes of] Washington and Beijing [with regard to his move to scrap the NUC and NUG] was based on his own

logic and not necessarily a result of `impulsiveness.' The only difference is that the logic of the Chen administration in dealing with Washington-Beijing-Taipei relations differs from the thought process of the pan-Blue camp and some scholars. That is, even though Chen knows that Taiwan needs the United States' protection, he is also clearly aware that the United States also needs Taiwan to restrain China. [Chen is aware that] it is not that Taiwan has no room to play its cards.

"When [Washington and Taipei] were busy negotiating over [Taiwan's plan to hold] a referendum in 2003, it was also a period in which Washington-Beijing relations were severely strained. [At that time,] the United States was anxious to deal with the problems of Iraq and North Korea and did not want Chen to affect U.S. cooperation with China. As a result, Washington publicly rebuked Taipei in front of Beijing during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to the United States. This exchange of blows made the Chen administration see through Washington's pattern of handling cross-Straits issues: namely, to `prevent things from getting bigger' `to mediate between both sides in an attempt to quell the whole argument.'

"People inside the Chen administration believe that no matter whether it was the referendum or [Chen's plan to] scrap the NUC and NUG, Washington stepped in [the cross-Straits disputes] in order to show its position to Beijing and to maintain its pivotal position between the two sides

of the Taiwan Strait. As long as Taiwan is willing to back up a little, plus accept some superficial `penalties', so that Washington can show them to Beijing, it will not be so difficult . for Taiwan to get through and go ahead with its plan. ."

F) "De-unification Is Chen's Legacy"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (2/28):

". Yesterday afternoon, Chen convened a National Security Council meeting and achieved a unanimous resolution that from now on the NUC should `cease to function' and its guidelines `cease to apply.' The word `abolish' was avoided to placate the U.S. Thus in both cases, Taiwan's `reckless' leader has had his way. Having achieved little during the past six years in office and with only two more to go, Chen now hopes to secure a legacy as the spiritual leader of the Taiwan independence movement. Freezing or abolishing the NUC does not change the status quo or advance the movement a bit, but `de-unification' has become Chen's shining achievement. .

"Washington is trapped. To punish Taipei, it may be seen as helping the undemocratic China to bully a democratic ally. But if it does not react, the much-needed `stakeholder' Beijing will see it as a tacit move to divide China. U.S. credibility is at stake. Its one-China policy, the bedrock of regional peace and stability, is undermined. But is Taiwan independence protected under the U.S. Taiwan Relations Act?"

KEEGAN